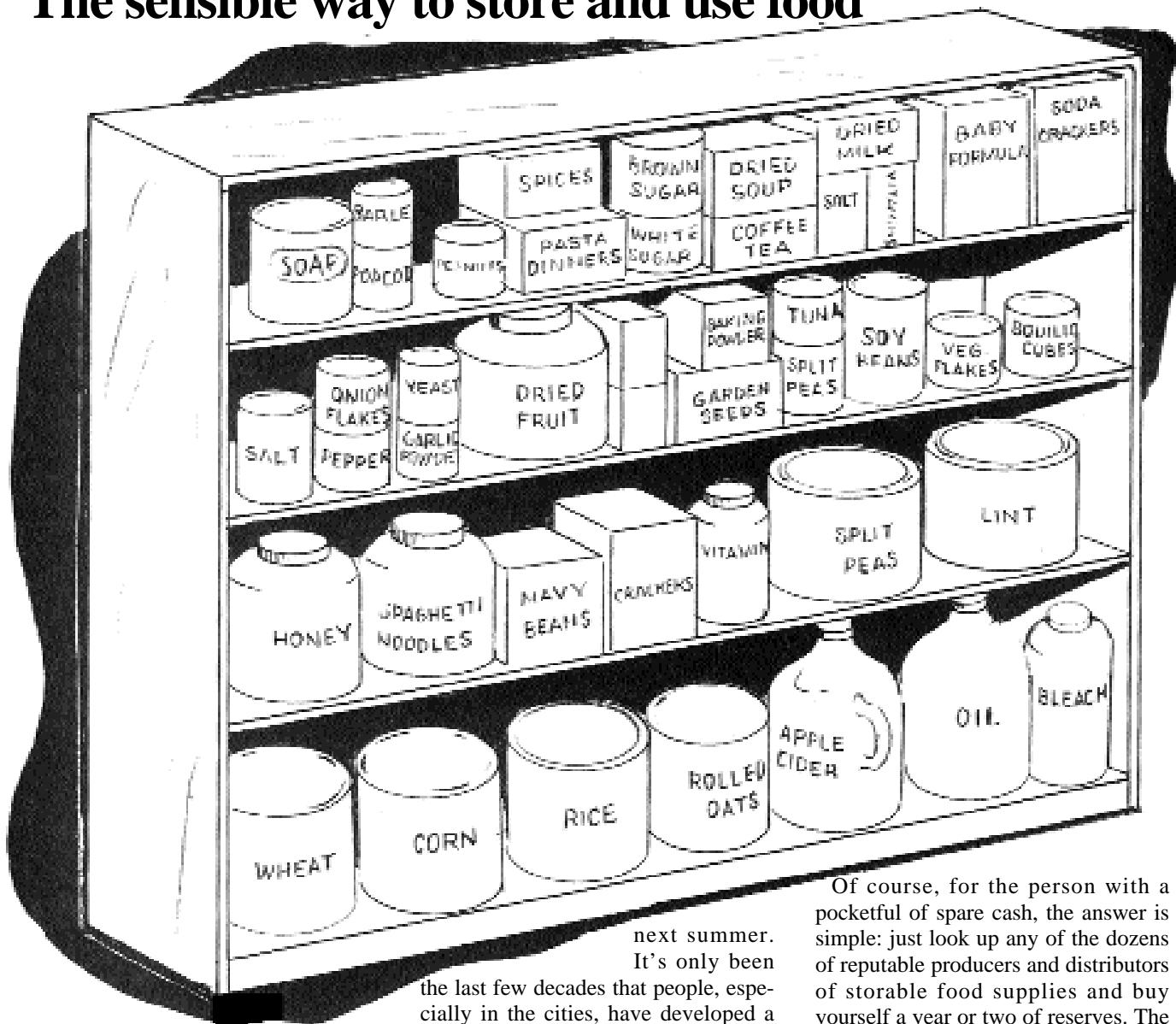


## The sensible way to store and use food



By Russ Davis

**A**cquiring and maintaining adequate food reserves is a prudent concept which country folks have always practiced. Crops harvested in the fall had to last until the next crop came in. Period. A well-stocked pantry and/or fruit cellar shielded them from the frailties of bad times. As a boy growing up, I spent long hours every fall helping to fill hundreds of sterilized Mason jars with the bounty of the garden. The work was hard and not a lot of fun, but it filled our tummies with good food all winter long and into the

next summer.

It's only been the last few decades that people, especially in the cities, have developed a "we can always run to the supermarket" mentality which has relegated the well-stocked larder concept to a place alongside buggies and kerosene lanterns.

In the light of today's uncertainties, with the potential for natural disaster, extended unemployment, or war—all of which could close the supermarkets we have become so dependent on—a survival-conscious person needs to revive the old concept of the full larder. For most people, the question is not whether this is a sound concept, but rather how to do it within the constraints of today's budgets.

Of course, for the person with a pocketful of spare cash, the answer is simple: just look up any of the dozens of reputable producers and distributors of storable food supplies and buy yourself a year or two of reserves. The options range from Spartan basics to super-deluxe combinations of freeze-dried goodies, with prices resembling telephone numbers to match.

Thus, for the rest of us, the question is how to get started on an already strained budget. The most reasonable answer is not to wait until you've won the lottery, but rather to try to squeeze a few extra bucks each week and to convert them into pantry-stuffers. Or to try to overbuy your actual needs by a few cans or containers of this or that each time you visit the market. (This would be in addition to any home canning and preserving you might be

doing from your own garden, etc.) It might not sound like much, but you'd be amazed what an extra five dollars a week could do. For example, in just three months', that extra five dollars could buy you, say, 50 pounds of as sorted dried beans, 50 pounds of rice, and still leave a buck or two over for some other incidentals. To be sure, far short of a balanced and complete food supply, but a lot of eating.

The central idea, then, is to accumulate, as quickly as your budget allows, a reserve supply of basic food which can be stored for long periods, and which provide maximum nutrition at minimum prices.

## Six guidelines

To succeed at this, here are six prudent guidelines to follow.

### **1. Be determined to be regular in your accumulation of food and supplies.**

Buy as much as you can, as quickly as you can, but then continue to accumulate stuff every week. Just like making car payments or any other obligation. Don't allow yourself to say "Gee, I really want to do it, but I need the money for something else, so I'll just double up next week." Next week might turn into week after next or next month and before you know it, your plan is weeks or months behind schedule.

### **2. Be inventive in creating new sources of funds.**

Hold a garage sale, collect returnable bottles, try to get in a little overtime—whatever you can do to accumulate a little extra money. Then use it to buy items for your emergency food supply.

### **3. Keep your pantry shelves stocked.**

Establishing an emergency food supply should never be done at the cost of your daily needs. Besides, a well-stocked pantry for everyday use can be a valuable addition to your emergency reserves. Conversely, do not rob your emergency supplies to meet your daily needs. The idea is to build up your reserves to the level you

feel is appropriate for your needs (a month, six months, a year, or whatever) and then to keep it as fresh as possible by using the oldest stock for your daily cooking while replacing it with new stock. Establish a permanent system of rotation and replacement.

### **4. Buy those items for long term storage which lend themselves to it, and which are things your family can and does eat on a more or less regular basis.**

This is important: Don't fill your emergency larder with foods you don't normally eat. For example, rice is an excellent basic staple which can be stored for many years, but if your family doesn't like rice, it would be foolhardy to store it. There have been cases in which children actually starved to death, refusing to eat food which was alien to them.

It is absolutely false to assume that hungry people are willing to eat anything. They might, but then again, they might not. Dry dog food is edible, but would you want to make 300 pounds of it your sole reserve food?

A reasonable approach would be to gradually and systematically introduce your family to some of the easily stored items on the list contained later in this article. In that way, they will be getting used to a variety of wholesome foods which can enrich their daily lives and minimize any "shock" to their systems when switching over to emergency supplies. For example, lentils are loaded with nutrition and are relatively easy to prepare, but the common variety is ugly. They're mottled brown and cook up looking like a bowl of mud. But, properly prepared, they taste delicious. Don't forget that old Bible story about Esau selling his inheritance to Jacob for a bowl of potage—that's Bible-talk for lentil stew. Taste them once and you'll know why Jacob knew what he was doing.

Another popular fallacy, even among those who should know better, is that your system can instantly and easily convert over from what you normally eat to whatever is available. This myth belongs in the same category

as the one about goats eating tin cans. They don't and you can't.

For example, much "to do" is made about reliance on a basic supply of whole wheat berries to be consumed pretty much in a cooked but otherwise unaltered state. Make no mistake about it: If you are on the typical soft white bread and low fiber don't-give-me-anything-I-have-to-chew-on-all-American-McDiet, converting immediately to a high fiber whole wheat diet will rip your intestines out and hand them to you on toilet paper. After a couple of days, you'll begin to think someone skated through your boudins with razor blades.

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Don't get me wrong. Wheat gruel, whole wheat breads, etc., are very nutritious. Our ancestors probably ate them as a basic diet. The Roman army consumed them daily and marched over half the known world, but their digestive systems were used to it. Yours is not, but it could be by gradually introducing such foods into your diet and consuming them on an ongoing basis. Do it gradually, okay? To make an immediate total conversion is an open invitation to flatulence, "runny-gits", and perhaps even intestinal bleeding.

On the other hand, if your family is used to eating whole grain breads, cooked whole cereals, etc., then the changeover is a piece of cake—actually a piece of bread. By extension of this principle, trying "survival" recipes on your family during normal times helps to determine likes and dislikes, and it practices sound nutrition in your daily life.

Do not be bashful about trying some of the more "exotic" foods which lend themselves to home manufacture. Many oriental products such as tofu, a type of soy bean curd which is easily produced, is an excellent source of high quality protein. Others include miso and tempeh. Reference books on

their manufacture and use are found at the end of this article.

**5. Always practice good economics by comparison shopping, buying in the most economical quantities, and using cooperative purchasing and other plans to save money.**

Use your calculator to determine the best buy. Prices for identical items can vary tremendously. I save 50% on some staples such as dried beans, rice, and pasta by stocking up at a warehouse type of grocery outlet. Bigger is not necessarily cheaper. I have found that the per pound price for many items such as rice and navy beans may be actually cheaper in one or two-pound bags than in 25-pound sacks. The only way you'll know for sure is to run it through your pocket calculator. Sometimes you might also be able to buy in bulk directly from local farmers or grain mills.

**6. Inform yourself, Establish a library of books on the subject.**

Several good ones are listed at the end of this article. Read them and use them. You need to have an intimate knowledge of nutrition and how to make the most of what you have. Being caught in a roaring blaze is a poor time to read the instructions on how to operate your fire extinguisher!

### What you need

Having elected to prepare your own survival larder, you now need to know what should go into your emergency food reserve supply. The master list (Table 1) contains two columns. In the left one, you will find the absolute basic essentials in each category. In the right are supplemental items which will add to the variety, effectiveness, and palatability of the basic supplies. In essence, take all of column one and as much of column two as you have time, money, and interest.

All amounts are for one average person for one year. Those doing heavy labor will require somewhat more, those doing less hard work, somewhat less. Split the proportions up according to your individual tastes. One

**Table 1. Master List**

	<u>Must have</u>	<u>Nice to have</u>
<b>Grains—total 350</b>		
<b>lbs.:</b>		
wheat	200-250	millet
corn	50	buckwheat groats (kasha)
rice	50-100	barley, popcorn, rolled oats
<b>Beans/legumes—total 100 lbs:</b>		
soy beans	3	kidney beans
navy beans	35	pinto beans
split peas	15	lima beans
lentils	20	alfalfa seeds—20 (to sprout)
mung beans	20-40 (to sprout)	whole dried peas—yellow or green
canned peanuts		
Epsom salts or calcium sulfate (to convert soybeans into tofu)		
<b>Miscellaneous:</b>		
assorted pastas (spaghetti, etc.)	25-50 lbs.	assorted pasta dinners (Kraft dinners, etc.)
honey	50lbs.	assorted instant "noodles" (Ramen) white and/or brown sugar molasses
non-instant dried milk	50 lbs.	an assortment of spices
peanut butter	5-10 lbs.	canned tuna and/or sardines
apple cider vinegar oil (peanut, corn, etc.)	1-2 gallons 6-7 gal.	soda crackers (saltines) powdered eggs
onion and tomato flakes		instant coffee/tea (a coffee sub. can be made from roast grains such as wheat)
salt - non-iodized	50 lbs.	other dried veg. flakes such as parsley, cabbage, carrot, celery, etc.
black pepper	1-2 lbs.	salt petre for preserving meat
dried garlic powder		red pepper
liquid bleach (Chlorox)	2 gal.	baking soda
all purpose soap	10-20 lbs.	protein powder
dried yeast	1-2 lbs.	spirulina powder (high protein)
assorted dried fruits	10-15 lbs.	fruit cakes
baking powder	1-2 lbs.	baby formula mix (good for adults, too!)
assorted bouillon cubes		dried soup mixes/bases
vitamins and supplements		Texture Vegetable Protein in assorted meat flavors
an "emergency garden" kit consisting of a variety of garden seeds—do not buy hybrids or you will not be able to collect seeds from your first crop. Seal this packet tightly and renew each year. (Use last year's to plant this year's home garden.)		
		freeze-dried starter for yogurt, and tempeh
		soy sauce, miso
		as "last splurge" items, all the dehydrated and freeze-dried commercially packed foods your budget will allow. Concentrate on meats, fruits, cheese mixes, desserts, etc. only after your column one has been filled.

well-known authority, Ann Elliott, has made the recommendations in Table 2, below, as bare-bone minimums.

Our master list uses a somewhat different breakdown and provides for a more variety and a higher caloric intake.

If you do not make regular use of a hand-operated grain mill, you may wish to buy one for emergency use. Steel-burried models are the cheapest, but stone-burried pries are the nicest.

**Table 2. Minimums**

	per person per day	per person per year
grains	12 oz.	300 lbs.
beans/ legumes	4 oz.	100 lbs.
honey	1.5 oz.	35 lbs.
salt	1/4 oz.	6 lbs.
dry milk	1.6 oz.	36 lbs.

## Some interpretations

First, bear in mind that the recommended amounts of each item are based on average tastes and consumption. If you have a good reason to vary yours, do it. For my personal tastes, I would reduce the amount of wheat by 100 pounds and bump the rice up an additional 180 pounds, plus 20 pounds of millet. I would also just about double the pasta and beans. Why? Because my family eats more rice, beans, and pasta, and a lot less wheat.

## Grains

A reasonable guideline is to figure approximately one pound of grain per person per day. This, when supplemented with beans, legumes, and a few other items, constitutes a reasonable daily ration.

## Wheat

**Wheat** is the standard for most Americans. Fine milled, it can be used to make breads and pastas. Cracked (meaning run through a very coarse setting on your grinder), it can be turned into a cooked breakfast cereal. When cooked for a short period of time in enough water to cover it, then dried in a very slow oven, it becomes **bulgur**, an Eastern European delight

which can be used to extend meats and stews. Bulgur keeps for a very long time; a healthy supply is part of my personal larder.

## Rice

I can scarcely say too much good about **rice**. It is **the** basic food for most of the world's population. It cooks up rather easily, provides a lot of nutrition (especially in combination with beans), and can be prepared about three zillion different ways. It also keeps well.

Recently, I found a couple of five-pound plastic sacks in one of our storage tubs (one of those snap lid five-gallon plastic buckets that once held salad dressing for a restaurant) which had been placed there eleven years earlier. We opened them, inspected them, and then ate the rice. It tasted every bit as good as the "fresh" rice in our regular bin.

**Barley** is great for soups. **Buckwheat groats** is another one of those Eastern European foods which is both easy to use and high in nutrient value. **Millet** is an easy to cook, easy to digest grain which is used all too seldom by Americans except for bird seed. It is, however, a main crop in many African countries. **Grain sorghum** is not mentioned above. It, too, is an extremely nutritious grain. It was originally grown to feed slaves, but has never found much acceptance. Too bad.

Regular **corn** yields cracked corn, corn meal, and corn flour, depending on how finely it's milled. With it you can make a wide variety of tasty items including corn bread, mush, polenta, even tortillas.

**Popcorn** has been added to the list. In addition to its popular form with salt and perhaps some butter or other fat, you may be surprised to know that popped dry and without salt, all you need is a little milk and sugar to turn it into a tasty breakfast cereal! Honest. Ask anyone who grew up in the depression when it was called "depression delight."

**Rolled oats** are super. They kept the Scots bounding around the highlands,

no doubt because they are full of energy—and cheap.

## Beans and legumes

Beans and legumes are the heavy artillery of nutrition. They are loaded with energy and are an excellent source of protein. Beans and other legumes of all descriptions should be in abundance in your reserve larder. They store very well, though older beans do take longer to cook tender.

Most Americans, if they know what **tofu** is, think of it as something they buy in the fresh vegetable section at the super market and use as an ingredient in oriental cooking. It can be made easily and fairly quickly from soy beans. Protein-starved orientals call it the meat without a bone. It is, truly, one of the wonder foods. It is very bland in flavor and takes on the taste of whatever it's cooked with. It is easily digested and a powerhouse of protein. The book on tofu listed in this article is a "must" reading. **Soybeans** also provide bean sprouts as do **mung beans**, which are a tad easier to sprout. Sprouting is simple, virtually idiotproof, and each pound of dry beans yields as much as six pounds of vitamin and energy packed sprouts in only four or five days. **Alfalfa seeds** also spring into a mountain of green munchies with no more encouragement than a little water, darkness, and time. If you have some starter, you can also convert cooked soybeans into tempeh, a solid white mass which has the texture and, according to many, also the mild taste of chicken. It can be sliced and fried.

**Lentils** are, as was previously mentioned, plain looking. Kind of ugly dull brown disks. Oriental shops also carry some of the Mideast and Indian varieties—bright oranges and yellows. Same great taste and super nutrition in fancy colors. Lentils require less preparation and cooking time than beans.

## Honey

Honey is the recommended sweetener because it is chemically different from regular white sugar and will

keep for a long, long time. In fact, honey was used as a preservative back in ancient Egypt. According to some scholars, merchants during the middle ages were known to have created a shortage of mummies by buying up those preserved in honey, throwing out the body, and selling the honey to unsuspecting buyers. It's okay to keep some of your sweetener supply in sugar, but try to keep as much of it in honey as you can.

### Powdered milk

Buy the non-instant variety of **powdered milk**. Dairies and bakeries are often good sources of this in bulk. It can be easily reconstituted by adding water and beating with a wire whip. Back in my Boy Scout days we used an over-sized cocktail shaker with a loose piece of fine chain in it. When shook, the chain flayed the water and the milk powder into a frothy liquid in about a half a minute. With a little effort, you can also turn reconstituted milk into yogurt or cheese—real taste treats and nutritional bonuses. Dairies and bakeries are also good sources to check about **powdered whole eggs**. Some of those fellers who were G.I.'s back in W.W. II would still shudder at the mention of powdered eggs, but they're a lot better these days.

**Vinegar** is something which is generally ignored by others when making suggestions about what to include in your reserve food supply. That's an oversight which should be corrected. It is just the thing to preserve and pickle, or to liven up the taste of stuff like bean soup. **Pure apple** cider is medicinal in a number of ways. Vinegar can also be used to make tofu and to make more vinegar, sort of like using a little of the old sour dough or yogurt as a starter for a fresh batch.

**Textured vegetable protein** (TVP) is listed in the right column. I'd give it very serious thought. TVP or TSP is a soybean product and comes unflavored as well as in beef, ham, or chicken. It might be a little harder to find this than most of the other items on the list. In this country it is found most commonly in granule form. In

Europe, it's available in chunks which, when soaked briefly in water, swell up to look like cubes of veal.

**Oil** is important in cooking and fats are very important in your diet. Buy it by the gallon in plastic jugs. **Dried vegetable flakes** are available in little bitty containers in the spice rack and in big cans from supply houses. Buy the sizes you want, but buy plenty. They add taste and variety to your meals. The same is true of **bouillon** cubes or powder. I recommend buying the big jars of beef, ham, and chicken-flavored soup base.

The amount of **salt** may seem high, but remember it can also be used as an antiseptic for wounds and sore throats, as a preservative in canning, and a lot of other things. Make sure you get the non-iodized kind if you intend to use it for canning.

Watch the expiration dates on items which have them. This is especially true of stuff like baking powder and dry yeast. Speaking of yeast, you can preserve its baking qualities virtually forever if you convert it into sour dough starter and use it on a regular basis.

**Spirulina** may require an explanation. It is a type of green fresh water algae which can be had in powdered or tablet form. It is a highly concentrated protein which can be taken by itself or added to just about anything else. Buy it in bulk to save money.

The listing of **fruit cakes** may have caused your eyebrows to raise, but high quality fruit cakes last about forever, if stored properly and rubbed down once in a while with an ample amount of rum. They taste great and they are highly concentrated "food bombs" loaded with both calories and nutrients. The best time to shop for them (unless you want to make your own, which is a lot of fun and not very difficult) is right after Christmas when merchants close them out for 50% or more off regular price.

Don't forget to include a supply of **vitamins and supplements**. The "one-per-day" multi-vitamins with minerals are okay for starters. Supplement them with extra B-complex in the 50 mg. dosage. Include extra C in the 500 or 1000 mg strength.

### Vegetable seeds

Another must is to invest 10 or 15 dollars in **vegetable seeds**. Kept tightly sealed and fairly cool, most garden vegetable seeds have at least a year or two germination life. Many are viable for much longer periods of time. Make sure that you buy the non-hybrid varieties. They may not bear so prolific as the fancy hybrids, but their seeds are true, so that you can collect them to act as a starter for the next year's garden.

Include tomatoes, turnips, lettuces, radishes, onions, carrots, cukes, melons, collard, corn, beans of all sorts, peas, cabbage, and anything which turns you on. Seed stores have fantastic varieties to choose from, but most are of the hybrid kind. Luckily, most discount stores run a garden shop in the spring and usually have big display bins of vegetable seeds, at very low prices—often for 12 or 15 cents per package. It has been my practice to buy five or six dollars worth of these and to pop them into a seal-a-meal bag. These go into storage for next year. Meanwhile, I take out last year's bag and plant those seeds this year. Thus, I always have next year's seeds on hand.

The last items, in terms of priorities, are those you buy with the money you have left over after you have filled your reserve food list. Any surplus dollars can and should be splurged on the kinds of things which the professional suppliers sell: dried cheddar cheese powder, dehydrated butter, dessert mixes, freeze-dried meats, etc. Anything which strikes your fancy. The variety is infinite.

Even overruns of government field rations—called **M.R.E.'s** by Uncle Sam and "Lurps" by the grunts—are readily available, though at about 3-4 dollars per meal packet, pretty expensive.

Another item which fits into this category is a supply of salami or summer sausage which has a long expiration date. At least two national chains sell such sausages. Aldi food stores (among others) carry a brand of Danish salami or summer sausage weighing a couple of pounds. It's on

the salty side but unopened, it probably has a shelf life of a couple of years at average room temperatures, and no doubt even longer at lower temps. Lasting just as long and tasting much, much better are the Hungarian salamis sold by K-Mart. They come in two varieties and two sizes: six ounces and a larger one about one pound. All of the items in this category share two characteristics in common: good taste and high costs, so despite their "tooth-someness," take care of your other needs first.

### **Storage considerations**

Except as noted, nothing on the master list has a nutrient shelf life of less than three to five years when stored properly. Watch the temperature in storage areas very carefully. Anything above 50 degrees F. will start to significantly shorten shelf life of foods like peanut butter and dried milk, among others. Grains and beans should be good for 10 years or even longer. As mentioned above, honey lasts for decades, though it has a tendency to crystallize. That's not a problem and if you prefer it in its more common liquid form, all you have to do is to heat it gently by setting the jar (with the top off) in some boiling water and stirring occasionally until it turns back into the familiar golden ooze.

If you are following the basic principles put forth in this article, long term storage is not a problem, because you will be practicing "R and R"—rotation and replacement. Since your reserve food supply will contain many of the kinds of foods you normally use, all you have to do is to take the oldest item from the reserve stocks (rotation) and replace it with a new one. For example, your regular food supply of cooking oil runs out. You simply take the oldest gallon of oil from your reserve supplies and replace it with a gallon of fresh oil. In this manner, you are using up the oldest while it is still relatively fresh and tasty, and replacing it with fresh stock. The only discipline required is to always take the oldest and **never, never** take anything

from the reserve supplies without replacing it immediately.

The type of storage you choose depends on your requirements and life style. If you are fairly mobile, your reserve food supply is best kept in smaller, easily moved containers. Unless you have the strength of an Irish longshoreman, avoid large barrels and big boxes. (They're fine for more permanent locations.)

Most people do not realize that there are plenty of free and low cost containers to be had which are perfect for this kind of storage. Restaurants normally obtain salad dressings and such things in screw top glass or plastic jars and big five-gallon plastic buckets with snap-on lids. Bakeries are another source of these. Sometimes you can get them for the asking, other times you might have to pay a little. In those areas of the country where I've lived, the most I ever had to pay for even one of the five-gallon buckets was 75 cents, though a buck or two is not an uncommon asking price. Another neat container can be obtained from those bakeries which get their bread mixes in 40 or 50 gallon fiber barrels. These have metal tops and bottoms. The tops are removable and are held in place with a shaped metal snap-on rim. These beauties will hold perhaps a couple of hundred pounds of wheat berries. I've also got somewhat smaller fiber barrels from a sausage maker who bought his spices in them.

### **Bug free containers**

To make your sealed containers bug free, place a 2"x2"x1" piece of dry ice in the bottom under a disposable aluminum pie tin in which you've poked several holes. Then fill, leaving the lid somewhat ajar. The dry ice will evaporate, giving off carbon dioxide which will push all the oxygen out of the container. Once this has subsided, you can then seal it tightly, leaving a hostile oxygen-free atmosphere behind for any bugs which might hatch. To seal before the carbon dioxide has done its thing is an invitation to a bulged or burst container. If your storage area is subject to any moisture

problems, you may want to take a little extra time and give the outside of your fiber barrels a waterproofing. Shellac is okay for this job. So are some paints. When in doubt, check the labels or ask the sales clerk.

### **Helpful books**

There are all kinds of books on the subject. Some are a lot better than others. The following are included in my library and are recommended for your consideration. If you are limited in funds, the four best ones for the beginner are probably Dickey, Ewald, Lappe, and Longacre. Each of the books on this list is special in some way. Quite naturally, each author has a somewhat different idea on what should go into a reserve food supply, how to store and prepare it, etc. For example, the *Natural Foods Storage Bible* by Dienstbier and Hendricks is written with the vegetarian in mind and outlines a reserve food supply selected especially for the lacto-vegetarian. The recipe section is a treasure trove.

Esther Dickey's original book, *Passport to Survival*, is a tribute to Mormon ingenuity. She has taken four basic foods wheat, honey, salt, and dried milk and created a rainbow of recipes, the variety of which is nothing short of amazing. If there is anything I've learned about Mormons, other than that they are hard-working, honest, and decent folks, it's that they take survival very seriously.

The majority of books that I am familiar with on establishing and using reserve supply systems are printed by Utah-based publishers like Bookcraft Publishers in Salt Lake City and Horizon Publishers in Bountiful who cater to Mormon (and non-Mormon) needs. You might want to write for their catalogs to see what other neat books they have in print. Other good sources are the shelves of your local library, natural food coops, and the catalogs of those companies specializing in so-called survival supplies.

Davenport, Rita. *Sourdough Cookery* (NYC: Bantam Books, 1977).

## *A Backwoods Home Anthology*

Densley, Barbara. *New Concepts In Dehydrated Food Cookery* (Bountiful, UT: Horizon Publishers, 1982).

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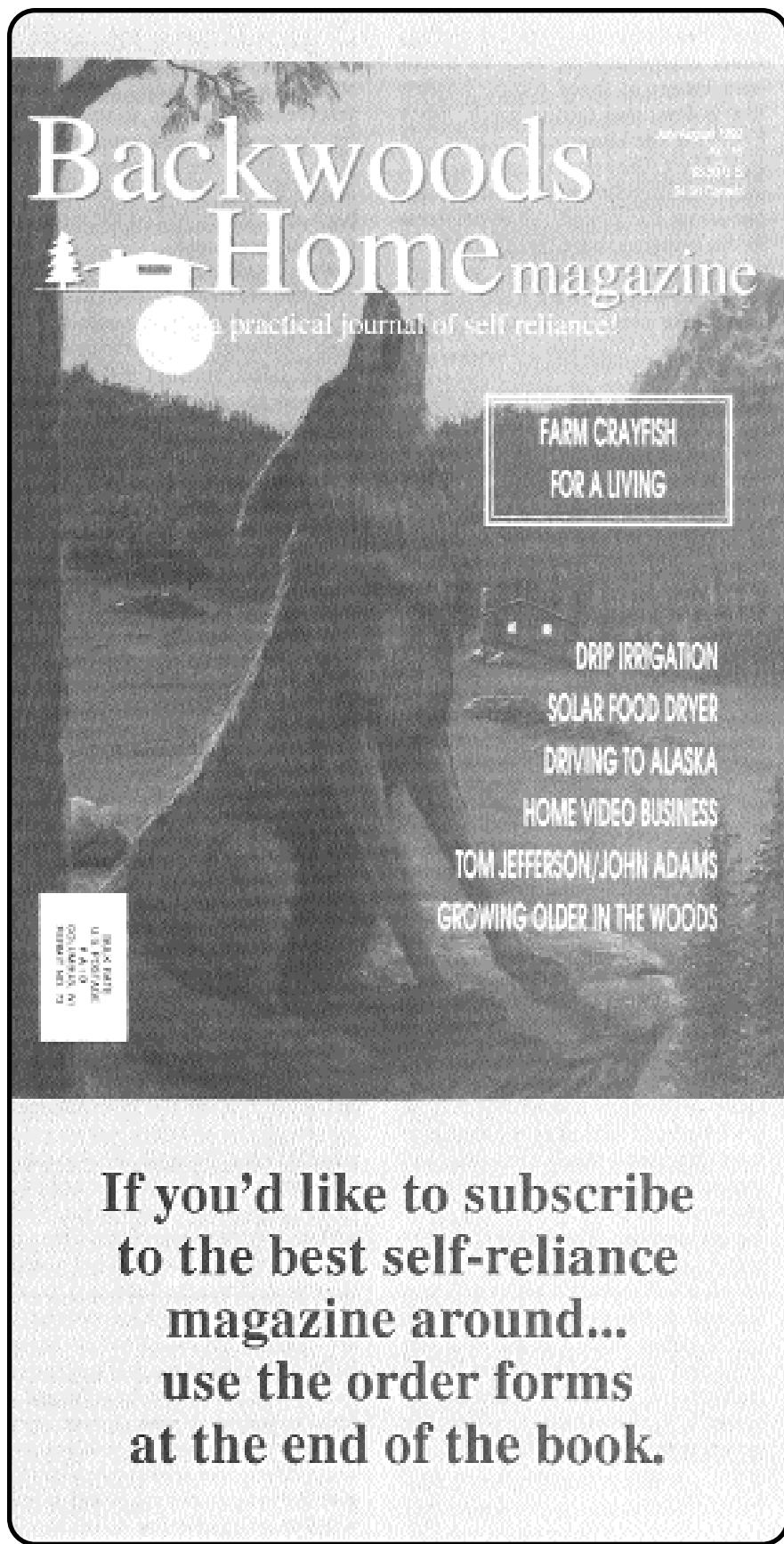
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*It is thrifty to prepare today for the wants of tomorrow.*

*Aesop, The Ant and Grasshopper*

*Go to the ant, thou sluggard;  
consider her ways, and be wise:  
Which having no guide, overseer,  
or ruler,  
Provideth her meat in the  
summer, and gathereth her food  
in the harvest.*

Psalms 6:6-8



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use the order forms  
at the end of the book.



***A Backwoods Home Anthology***

Zabriskie, Bob R. *Family Storage Plan* (Salt Lake City: Publishers Press, 1966). Δ